

Is a Man Worth Less Than a House?

The Supreme Court of Indiana says that no license can give a saloon the right to damage other property. *The Press*, of Philadelphia, says this is a just decision, and so it is. But if a license cannot give to a saloon the right to impair the value of other property, can it give to a saloon the right to destroy life, health and morals? Is a house worth more than the man or woman who occupies it? Is a building worth more than an immortal soul? Is the protection of brick and mortar of more importance than the protection of blood and brain?

It may be said that the court was not passing on such questions of ethics on a question of law. This, however, is a misleading view. The court went behind the statute law to the great principles of equity and justice that underlie all law. Had the court shut its eyes to anything else than the statute books of Indiana it never could have made the decision with which it has just started the world. The statute laws gave the commissioners of Marion county the authority to issue a license to the saloon in question. The statute laws gave Stehlin the authority to carry on business under the terms of that license. But the court says, No; that license is void, because it gives one man the right to destroy the value of another's property without compensation, and this is contrary to the first principles of justice.

Gentleman of the Supreme Court of Indiana, if the license laws of a State cannot authorize one man to thus impair the value of another man's property, can it authorize him to imperil another man's life? That is a question the answer to which you have evaded. You are very clear in your ideas about the sanctity of property, but you are very muddy in your ideas about the sanctity of life. Every man knows that the destruction of life by the saloon is just as obvious as the destruction of property. The suit, it is true, was brought for damage to property, but it was based upon the claim

that the license laws of Indiana are unconstitutional because the saloon is a peril to life. You felt called upon to pass upon that point and you have decided that while a saloon can have no right, and the legislature can give it none, to destroy property, it can have the right to destroy life.—The Lever.

Any one who is familiar with the action of poison upon the living animal body, and has made that a subject of special study, has not the smallest hesitation in saying that alcohol is a poison.—W. B. Carpenter, M.D.

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